

32 YEARS OF DEDICATED SENATE SERVICE

Mr. CRAPO. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize the service of Carolyn Iddings, my Sergeant at Arms customer support analyst. On June 4, 2005, Carolyn celebrated 32 years of service in the Senate.

Carolyn began her Senate career in the office of Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon. For 16 years, she helped develop many of the systems the Senate uses today including office computers and correspondence management systems. Carolyn then joined the Sergeant at Arms office and has continued to assist in the development and deployment of many Senate information management systems.

Shortly after my election to the Senate, Carolyn was assigned to guide my staff through the complex process of opening a Senate office. Her experience and knowledge of the inner workings of a Member's office were indispensable as she assisted my staff in the opening days of the 106th Congress. She took my systems administrator under her wing and helped him equip in a timely and efficient manner. Thanks to her efforts, my office was up and running the day I was sworn in as a U.S. Senator. Her knowledge of the challenging bureaucratic landscape of the Senate played a key role in the smooth setup of my offices. On numerous occasions Carolyn's help has proven invaluable as our office automation systems have evolved.

Over the last 7 years, Carolyn has answered hundreds of questions, briefed my staff on countless security, information technology, and emergency planning matters. She has shown consistent patience, kindness, and expertise in her interactions with me and my staff, always willing to lend a helping hand. Carolyn demonstrates outstanding professionalism in her job and I wish her the best.

VETERANS AND TROOP DEPLOYMENTS

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise today to commend the contribution of our Armed Forces to this great Nation. It is important to reflect on the sacrifice and commitment of the brave men and women who have put their lives on the line to defend what our Nation stands for—freedom, equality, and justice for all Americans.

Without our veterans, we would not be the free Nation that we are today.

The marines, airmen, and soldiers of Montana have always risen to the challenge by fighting overseas and protecting our homeland.

Over the past 2 weeks 700 members of the first of the 163rd infantry battalion of Montana's National Guard returned home after an 18 month deployment in Iraq and 250 troops from the first of the 189th aviation battalion will return home before the holidays.

I am extremely proud of these men and women, but I also have great concern for them.

Montana now has the highest percentage of veterans per capita in its population than any other state. We also have the highest percentage of female veterans in the country, per capita.

According to the most recent census, the veteran population in Montana is 108,476 out of an adult civilian population of 668,651. Simply put, veterans, and families of veterans, constitute a significant portion of the population in Montana.

They are our mothers, fathers, daughters, sons, sisters, brothers, and friends who are making sacrifices. I take our Nation's commitment to our veterans seriously.

Many Montanans choose to serve because of the economic situation in rural America.

There is no question that rural States are carrying a huge burden when it comes to our current conflicts abroad and these veterans deserve proper healthcare.

I am proud to say that this year the VA Hospital at Fort Harrison, Helena, MT and its outpatient clinics have been ranked as the best VA medical system in the country; however, the shortfalls that we faced in veterans healthcare funding nationwide in 2005 and 2006 are discouraging.

We still need to ensure that those who have given so much for our country are granted their due benefits, and treated with respect. Let's think big when it comes to providing for our veterans and health care.

We must fully fund the veterans' health care system and we should make spending mandatory in order to ensure that those who have given so much to our country are granted their due benefits and are treated with respect and thanks.

Let's think big when it comes to providing for our veterans and health care. We must fully fund the Veterans health care system and we should make spending mandatory in order to ensure that those who have given so much to our country are granted the benefits they deserve.

Since September 11, 2001, about 80 percent of Montana's National Guard members have been deployed to the Middle East, some of them more than once. This Monday in Great Falls, MT, members of our 341st space wing and Red Horse Squadrons from Malmstrom Air Force Base and the Air National Guard will deploy to Iraq.

When they return, they should not have to worry about getting health care and benefits.

As we welcome home our new veterans and deploy troops overseas, let us remember those who have served honorably in all wars, and pay particular attention to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice.

The current wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have taken the lives of the following brave Montanans: SPC Travis Arndt, Great Falls; CPT Michael MacKinnon, Helena; PFC Andrew

Bedard, Missoula; LCpl Nicholas Bloem, Bozeman; SFC Robbie McNary, Lewistown; CPL Raleigh Smith, Troy; LCpl Nathan Wood, Great Falls; SSG Aaron Honeyman, Glasgow; LCpl Kane Funke, Kalispell; CPL Dean Pratt, Stevensville; PFC Owen D. Witt, Sand Springs; 1LT Edward Saltz, Big Fork; PFC Kristofer Stoneisfer, Missoula; 1LT Josh Hyland, Missoula.

DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT

Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, drought continues to be a serious problem for many states in this country, and I am very pleased that yesterday, as part of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006, we passed legislation that will help small businesses in those States that have been hurt by drought. I thank Senators LEVIN and WARNER, and their staffs, for their help in moving drought relief one step closer to enactment.

This legislation helps small businesses that need disaster assistance but can not get it through the Small Business Administration's disaster loan program. You see, the SBA does not treat all drought victims the same. The agency only helps those small businesses whose income is tied to farming and agriculture. However, farmers and ranchers are not the only small business owners whose livelihoods are at risk when drought hits their communities. The impact can be just as devastating to the owners of rafting businesses, marinas, and bait and tackle shops. Just ask the many small businesses on Lake Mead, outside of Las Vegas, that met with the committee in July: fishing guides that struggle to find ramps that still reach the water to launch their boats; boat dealerships in the county that have lost an estimated \$100 million in sales because recreation at the lake is down; marinas paying millions to move their docks, buildings, and utilities, trying to "chase the water." The area usually gets 8 to 10 million visitors a year. However, the impact of drought on Lake Mead has had a serious adverse impact on the regional economy, exceeding \$1 billion according to local officials. Lake Michigan has suffered similar economic losses, and its delegation has been pushing for small business relief for years. Sadly, these small businesses cannot get help through the SBA's disaster loan program because of something taxpayers hate about Government—bureaucracy.

The SBA denies these businesses access to disaster loans because its lawyers say drought is not a sudden event and therefore it is not a disaster by definition. However, contrary to the agency's position that drought is not a disaster, in July of 2002, when this legislation was originally introduced, the SBA had in effect drought disaster declarations in 36 States. As of today, 17 States are under SBA drought disaster declarations: Wisconsin, Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, Montana, Oregon,